

**Department of Health and Human Services
Health Care Financing Administration
Operational Policy Letter #101
OPL99.101**

DATE: August 27, 1999

SUBJECT: Migration of Medicare Managed Care Organizations (MCO) to the Medicare Data Communications Network (MDCN) for Health Plan Management System (HPMS) Access

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 1999

Background

In Operational Policy Letter (OPL) #92, the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) required **all** MCOs to establish connectivity to the MDCN in order to perform their Medicare business functions, including access to HPMS.

OPL #92 required that Medicare MCOs establish MDCN connectivity no later than June 30, 1999. It further instructed that HCFA would implement the use of MDCN connectivity for HPMS access after completion of the Contract Year (CY) 2000 Adjusted Community Rate Proposal (ACRP) process.

At this time, Medicare MCOs are accessing HPMS by means of a secure Internet connection at www.fu.com/hpms. Beginning **October 1, 1999**, HCFA will require that Medicare MCOs use the MDCN to access the HPMS.

What is the HPMS? And Do I Need to Access It?

The HPMS is an information system and data exchange mechanism for data related to Medicare MCOs. By serving as the centralized repository for Medicare MCO data, the HPMS will provide its users with access to these data as well as with an analytical framework for exploring the data. In addition to its analytical functions, the HPMS will provide various data collection modules to support the electronic submission of Medicare managed care data.

Ultimately, the HPMS will house a variety of Medicare managed care data. The HPMS will collect some data sources, while HCFA support contractors and interfaces with existing HCFA systems will provide others. The HPMS data repository will include, but not be limited to, the Medicare MCO data described below:

- C The HPMS is collecting cost and benefit data, specifically the ACR, Benefit Information Form (BIF) 2000, Medicare Compare, and beginning with CY 2001, the Plan Benefit Package, as well as Physician Incentive Plan data. In future releases, the HPMS will also collect aggregate plan-level appeals and standard plan information, such as service areas, continuation areas, and MCO contact information.
- C The HPMS will also receive data sources collected by HCFA support contractors, including the Health Outcomes Survey, the Consumer Assessment of Health Plan Survey, the Health Plan Employer Data Information Set, and appeals data from the Center for Health Dispute Resolution.
- C Finally, the HPMS will receive extracts or data feeds from existing HCFA systems, such as enrollment and disenrollment statistics from the Medicare Managed Care Systems and encounter data.

The HPMS will support numerous efforts, including, but not limited to, the approval and pricing of plan benefits, monitoring of plan performance, quality of care initiatives, Medicare+Choice policy development, research and evaluation activities, and the National Medicare Education Program (e.g., the *Medicare & You* handbook and Medicare Compare).

Telecommunications Requirements

IBM Global Services (IGS) maintains the MDCN for HCFA to support telecommunications between the agency and its contractors. Medicare carriers and fiscal intermediaries are currently operating on the MDCN, and HCFA required Medicare MCOs to establish connectivity to the MDCN no later than June 30, 1999, per OPL #92.

To access the HPMS via the MDCN beginning **October 1, 1999**, Medicare MCOs must have the following:

- C an IGS dialer or leased line with TCP/IP connectivity; and
- C Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher.

Because the HPMS resides on the mid-tier, and not on the mainframe, your IGS dialer or leased line **must** have TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol) connectivity.

***Note:** Although the HPMS does not require the 128-bit encryption version of Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher, the 128-bit version is required for those users who are accessing the HCFA Data Center (i.e., the HCFA mainframe) through the web browser-based TN3270 client, as described in OPL #92.*

Establishing Medicare Data Communications Network Connectivity

Per OPL #92, many Medicare MCOs have already established MDCN connectivity. For those Medicare MCOs who have not yet established MDCN connectivity, IGS offers the following three options:

- C For MCOs without existing IGS connectivity who require large transmission volumes, IGS offers leased lines.
- C For MCOs without existing IGS connectivity who require lower transmission volumes, IGS offers dial-up accounts.
- C For MCOs with existing IGS connectivity, IGS can apply MDCN access to the existing IGS network user ID profile.

In all cases, the selected IGS option **must** include TCP/IP connectivity. To ensure that you establish the most appropriate connectivity, HCFA strongly recommends that Medicare MCOs discuss both their business needs and current telecommunications environment with IGS prior to selecting an option.

Accessing the HPMS Beginning on October 1, 1999

Beginning October 1, 1999, the HPMS will no longer be available via a secure Internet connection at www.fu.com/hpms. At that time, Medicare MCOs will access the HPMS by:

- C Connecting to the IGS network;
- C Connecting to the MDCN from within the IGS network;
- C Launching their Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher browser; and
- C Entering the HPMS IP address (**32.82.208.82**) in the browser.

To connect to the IGS network, Medicare MCO users must have an IGS network user ID and password. In addition, Medicare MCO users must have a HCFA Identification Tracking System (HITS) user ID and password to access the HPMS. The IGS and HITS user IDs and passwords are separate and distinct from one another.

Medicare MCO users should contact the HPMS Help Desk at 1-800-220-2028 to obtain the HITS user ID request form. The IGS Help Desk will provide the IGS user ID and password to the Medicare MCO upon establishment of an IGS account.

Telecommunications Requirements for Third Party Contractors

The telecommunications requirements described in this OPL apply to **all** HPMS users, including third party entities that contract with Medicare MCOs to perform certain Medicare business functions. Consequently, these entities must ensure that they have TCP/IP connectivity to the MDCN prior to October 1, 1999.

Contact Information

For questions about the information contained in this OPL, please contact Lori Robinson, of the Center for Health Plans and Providers, at either LRobinson1@hcfa.gov or 410-786-1826.

For information on establishing IGS and MDCN connectivity, please contact the IGS Help Desk at 1-800-905-2069.

For questions about HPMS access, please contact the HPMS Help Desk at 1-800-220-2028.

This OPL was prepared by the Center for Health Plans and Providers.